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THE WORD "HANDFUL" IN PSALM 72:16.

The verse in which this word occurs, appeared as the Golden Text of one of our Sunday School lessons a few weeks ago. It was remarkably appropriate as an illustration of the growth of the Kingdom, analogous to Christ's parable of the Mustard Seed. But that on which the whole similarity rests—the word translated "handful"—is held by the best critics to mean *abundance*. This view, which would exactly reverse the idea that the passage now gives us, merits examination.

We study it first from the lexicographical standpoint. This word **פפ**, occurs only in this passage. It may be the feminine form of **פ** which means *extremity, end*. Even in that case the meaning "*handful*" as that which, approaching the end, is very small in amount, is somewhat fanciful. It shows an oriental origin. It is the offspring of imagination.

The best derivation is that accepted by Gesenius, Delitzsch and Perowne. They connect it with the verb **פפ** to spread abroad (used of the leprosy). Thus the idea of *abundance* very naturally follows. Besides having the authority of these most eminent Hebraists, this interpretation is that given by the Syriac version and by most Jewish lexicographers. A passage in the Midrash (quoted by Perowne) supports without doubt this view.

Having the weight of lexicographical authority in its favor, this rendering may be considered in its grammatical relations.

The apocopated imperfect **יִהְיֶה** is best taken as an optative of wish—"may there be"—in strict accordance with the precatory nature of the principal verbs throughout the psalm. Any other construction would involve great difficulties. The prayer for "abundance of corn" is perfectly natural, while a petition for a "handful" is incongruous if not absurd.

Equally strong confirmation is gained from considering the logical order of thought. The psalm is a royal psalm. Its petitions are for great things, blessings of righteousness, peace, prosperity, a universal and everlasting dominion. The idea of small beginnings has no place in such a grand survey. The very fact of its unusual, and unexpected, though forcible, character, is a very strong objection to its adoption. It would stand alone in the psalm, unconnected with anything before or after, uncalled for by the purpose or thought of the writer.

It is no confirmation of the old view or any objection to this one, that the corn is to be cast upon the tops of the mountains; for they are selected not as being sterile, and unfavorable to the growth of the grain, but, as in the third verse of the psalm, because they, being the most conspicuous portions of the landscape, especially in Palestine, would be the index of the fertility of the whole land. How forcible then the wish that these high signal-peaks be covered with an abundant growth which shall wave like Lebanon!

Thus it is seen that the critical evidence inclines most emphatically to sustain the interpretation "*abundance*."

The exegetical analogy, founded on the word "handful," has little or no weight as a positive argument, though with some minds a sentimental consideration would tend to preserve it. The best lexicography, the simplest grammatical and logical exegesis of this verse are all against it.

G. S. G.

A TABLE OF ABRAHAM'S LIFE.

The following table exhibits the leading incidents in the life of Abraham, and his age at the time, when that is either specified in the record or can be fixed:—

Age.	Incident.	Record.
70 [?]	Call from God at Ur of the Chaldees.....	Acts vii. 2—5
75.	Call repeated at Haran.....	Gen. xii. 1—4
	Migration from Haran to Canaan.....	xii. 4, 5.
	Halt at Sichem—third Divine manifestation between Bethel and Hai.....	xii. 6, 7.
	The Tent and the Altar.....	xii. 8.
	Journey to Egypt—intercourse with Pharaoh.....	xii. 10—20.
	Return to Bethel—separation from Lot.....	xiii. 1—13.
	Fourth Divine manifestation..	xiii. 14—17.
80. [?]	Settlement at Mamre, Hebron	xiii. 18.
	Rout of the invaders.....	xiv. 1—16.
	Interviews with Melchizedek and the king of Sodom....	xiv. 17—24.
	Fifth Divine manifestation—the covenant of faith.....	xv.
85.	Flight of Hagar.....	xvi. 1—14.
86.	Birth of Ishmael.....	xvi. 15, 16.
99.	Sixth Divine manifestation—covenant of circumcision..	xvii.
	Seventh Divine manifestation—the three angels.....	xviii. 1—14.
	Sodom and Gomorrah—Abraham's intercession.....	xviii. 16—33.
	Destruction of the cities of the plain.....	xix.
	Sojourn at Gerar—intercourse with Abimelech.....	xx.
100.	Birth of Isaac.....	xxi. 1—5.
	Casting out of Ishmael—eighth Divine manifestation....	xxi. 8—21.
	The covenant with Abimelech—Beersheba.....	xxi. 22—34.
125. [?]	The great temptation—Mount Moriah.....	xxii. 1—14.
	Ninth Divine manifestation—the oath and the blessing.	xxii. 15—18.
137.	Death and burial of Sarah....	xxiii. 1, 2.
	The cave of Machpelah.....	xxiii. 3—20.
140.	Mission for Rebekah—marriage of Isaac.....	xxiv.
	Marriage with Keturah—its issue.....	xxv. 1—4.
175.	Death and burial of Abraham.	xxv. 7—9.

—Hanna.

EMPLOYMENT OF THE ORIGINAL TEXTS.

It seems superfluous to affirm that the divine who has undertaken to interpret the Bible, ought to consult habitually the original texts. Nevertheless, the practice is neglected by many theologians, even by those who possess sufficient erudition and abundant leisure.

Frequently this neglect is simply a matter of indolence. A large class of thinkers regard the authorized versions of the Scriptures as sufficient. It is a mistake. Even the most accurate of the different translations present the truth in a veiled condition. They can simply approximate, more or less closely, the precision and clearness of the original. Every version leads, sooner or later, into error. The man who reads the original text with attention, with the requisite knowledge and disposition, discovers very frequently some new point of view, some unforeseen intention, some profound and suggestive allusion, some new and precious element in the thoughts of the sacred author.

This method, moreover, has, in common with all the profounder studies, the immense advantage of giving to

the theologian great vividness and freshness of thought, united to the assurance of having successfully accomplished his task. It stimulates the thought, adds pleasure to the intellect, gives veritable delight to the heart, and strengthens faith. All these advantages are more or less denied to the indolent investigator who contents himself with the ideas sometimes confused, and the beauties always impaired, of the best translations.

In others this negligence is the result of an excessive confidence in a certain, justly esteemed version. But, in addition to depriving themselves of the above mentioned advantages, interpreters of this stamp are exposed to many grievous errors. They are in danger of the mistakes that the most perfect versions present on almost every page; and it is difficult for them to avoid the error of accepting and pressing the significance of the individual words, which can rarely reproduce the original with entire accuracy. Let us notice a few familiar examples.

The German theologians have supported the institution of patronage upon the Mosaic usages, in despite of the documents and facts; doing so, simply because Luther translated אֲמוֹן (Esther, ii, 7,) which signifies "a foster parent" by Vormund, "a guardian."

A preacher of mature years delivered a discourse upon Ps. xxxix, 5, according to the version of Osterwald, "Thou hast reduced my days to the measure of four fingers," and thought it his duty to explain to his auditory why the psalmist spoke only of four fingers of the hand, saying nothing of the fifth. If he had been conversant with the original, he would have discovered that it was a question not of four different fingers, but of a measure of length טַפַּח "the palm"), equal to four widths of a finger. The sermon was ridiculous, no doubt, and the preacher devoid of good sense. But the judgment and genius of Saint Augustine have not prevented him from making many mistakes of this character, because he made but little use of the original texts.—*From Elliott and Harsha's Hermeneutics.*

The Arrogance of the Pharaohs.

The insolent pride with which Pharaoh received the message communicated by Moses, as: "Who is Jehovah, that I should hear his voice, to let Israel go?" "I know not Jehovah and will not let Israel go?" in chap. 5: 2; the obstinacy which he afterwards exhibits, when the divine punishments fall upon him, one after another, in deciding to go to destruction with his land and people, rather than yield, are proved on the monuments in various ways, to be in accordance with the genuine spirit of a Pharaoh. A comparison of the representation of the victory of Rameses Meiamun, in Thebes explained by Champollion, is of special interest in this connection. The Pharaoh, it is there said, at whose feet they lay down these trophies of victory, (the severed right hand and other members of the body,) sits quietly in his chariot, while his horses are held by his officers, and directs a haughty speech to his warriors: "Give yourselves to mirth; let it rise to heaven. Strangers are dashed to the ground by my power. Terror of my name has gone forth; their hearts are full of it; I appear before them as a lion; I have pursued them as a hawk; I have annihilated their wicked souls. I have passed over their rivers; I have set on fire their castles; I am to Egypt what the god Mandoo has been; I have vanquished the barbarians; Amun Re, my father, subdued the whole world under my feet, and I am the king on the throne forever." It is said we mistake the whole character of Champollion's work, if we assert the literal truth of this translation; but the spirit which the speech breathes may always be recognized from it.

The ancient Egyptian kings named themselves in their pride, Kings of the whole world; and what is yet more, they in this arrogance claim divine honors for themselves. This can be proved by a multitude of arguments, of which we will here give only a few. The Menephtheum at Thebes has a double character, that of a temple and palace. It is in all its plan destined for the dwelling of a man, and yet

it reminds one by its decorations, of the consecrated residence of a god. Even the name Pharaoh is a monument of this idea. It cannot be doubted that it designates the king, at the incarnation of the sun, which the Egyptians named Phre. The proof of this Rosellini furnishes, relying specially upon the fact that among the royal emblems, a disk, representing the sun, takes the first place. This is, accordingly, the first title which all the kings of Egypt bore. Phre also occurs, Gen. 41: 45, in the name of the priest at On or Heliopolis, city of the sun, Potiphera, that is, consecrated to Phre. This name is also very common on the Egyptian monuments.—*From Hengstenberg's Egypt and the Books of Moses.*

The Biblical view of the Heaven.

The heaven¹ is regarded as a canopy or a curtain,² spread over the earth in such infinite distance, that men appear from there "like grasshoppers"; it is a tent for the habitation of God.³ It is immeasurable.⁴ It is strong and massive, like "a molten mirror";⁵ but not brazen, like the Homeric heaven;⁶ it resembles the mirror chiefly with regard to its bright splendor;⁷ for it is like pellucid sapphire,⁸ or like crystal.⁹ This vault has a gate, through which the angels descend to the earth,¹⁰ or through which the prophets beheld their heavenly visions.¹¹ It has, further, windows¹² or doors,¹³ through which the rain and dew, snow and hail, treasured up in the clouds above,¹⁴ and held together in those spheres by the will of God, pour down upon the earth at His command; by which the tempests also, there confined in apartments,¹⁵ are let loose; and through which the lightning flashes, either as a symbol of Divine omnipotence, or as a messenger of Divine wrath.¹⁶ In the heaven of firmament, the sun, the moon, and the stars are fixed, to send their light to the earth and its inhabitants, and to regulate the seasons;¹⁷ hence the heaven is described as exercising power or government over the earth,¹⁸ since the phenomena of the air also are controlled by its influence.¹⁹ Beyond this illumined canopy reigns darkness, which the Divine wisdom has, with a nice distinction, separated from the regions of light.²⁰ But above it is a sphere of liquid stores;²¹ here dwells God,²² for here He has framed His chambers; here is His sanctuary, His palace, the place of His glory;²³ from hence He traverses the world on the wings of the wind and in the chariot of the clouds;²⁴ for the heaven is His throne, and the earth is His footstool.²⁵ That whole vault is supported by mighty pillars or foundations,²⁶ resting on the earth; and thus heaven and earth are marked as one majestic edifice, forming the universe.—*M. Kalisch.*

¹ שָׁמַיִם, שָׁמַיִם, רִקְעָה.

² רִקְעָה or רִיבְעָה.

³ Ps. civ. 2; Isai. xl. 22.

⁴ Jer. xxxi. 37.

⁵ Job xxxvii. 18.

⁶ Il. v. 504; xvii. 425; Odyss. iii.

⁷ Dan. xii. 3.

⁸ Exod. xxiv. 10.

⁹ Rev. iv. 6; comp. Ezek. i. 22.

¹⁰ Gen. xxviii. 17.

¹¹ Ezek. i. 1.

¹² אֲרָבֹת Gen. vii. 11; 2 Kings

¹³ vii. 2, 19; Isai. xxiv. 18.

¹⁴ דְּלִתִּים Ps. lxxviii. 23. Herod.

¹⁵ iv. 158.

¹⁶ Gen. i. 7; Job xxvi. 8; Ps. cxlviii. 4; Prov. viii. 28.

¹⁷ Job xxxvii. 9.

¹⁸ Job xxxvii; xxxviii. 22 et seq.;

¹⁹ Ezek. xlii. 13; Sir. xliii. 14 et seq.

²⁰ Gen. i. 14-19.

²¹ Job xxxviii. 33.

²² Ver. 36.

²³ Job xxvi. 10.

²⁴ Compare the Rig-Veda in Cole-

²⁵ brooke, Essays, i. 47.

²⁶ Psal. xxix. 10; Job xxvi. 9.

²⁷ Ps. xl. 4; Ezek. iii. 12.

²⁸ Ps. civ. 3; Ezek. i. 26.

²⁹ Isai. lxvi. 1.

³⁰ מוֹסְדוֹת, עִמְּכֹדִים Job xxvi. 11;

³¹ 2 Sam. xxii. 8.

BOOK NOTICES.

After this number a page or more of each issue will be given to the notice of books which relate, directly or indirectly, to the Old Testament. Attention will not be confined entirely to NEW books; but it is proposed also to notice, so far as possible, such old books, in this department of study, as may be of general interest to pastors and students.